



“Learning service”: “Being”, engagement and social justice

Janice McMillan, Senior Lecturer, University of Cape Town [janice.mcmillan@uct.ac.za]

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Summary

Service learning is argued to have a huge impact on students' sense of self and their identity in the world (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999). It is often heralded as an important way of providing transformative learning spaces, which contribute to a student's "way of being" in the world. However others argue that service-learning isn't inherently transformative nor does it focus explicitly on students' own sense of the world and their self. Yet others pose questions about power and privilege, about the paradigms that operate in service, about relationships that 'cross borders', and about key service-learning processes such as mutuality and reciprocity.

Higher education provides students with knowledge and assists them to learn to do things in new ways. In this paper I argue that in an era of ‘supercomplexity’, curricula should give attention not just to knowing and doing, but to ‘being’ too. (Barnett 2004; 2009). The key challenge therefore is not so much

requires an exploration of self, but not as a decontextualized practice; it is self in relation to the world, to others, and to the social realm.

Linked to service-learning, the challenge lies not just in developing new courses; it lies in challenging and assisting students to 'learn service' (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006). Following Boyle-Baise et al., I believe when 'a study of service itself grounds the curriculum', it can help disrupt students' preconceived notions of service and interrogate their positionality in relation to community: to 'be' in new ways. This paper discusses how these arguments shaped the design of a new program at the University of Cape Town that focuses on students as 'globally engaged citizens' and puts service, context, and social justice at the core of its curriculum,

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